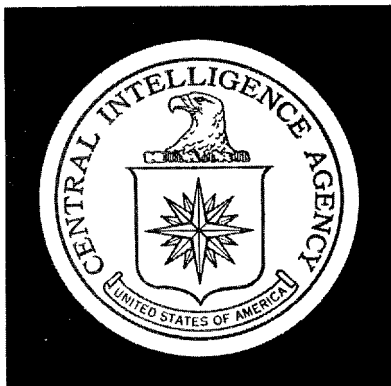


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

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6 March 1967

ARMY review(s) completed

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Information as of 1600

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HIGHLIGHTS

Vietnamese Communist mortar attacks on US forces and base camps continue. Details on preparations for the Communist rocket attack on Da Nang last week have been provided by a captured porter.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

Recent evidence indicates increased North Vietnamese military activity in the Demilitarized Zone/Quang Tri Province area (Paras. 1-5). Communist forces continue to shell US bases with mortars (Para. 6).

Details on the preparations for the Communist rocket attack on Da Nang have been provided by a captured porter (Paras. 9-12). Captured documents suggest a future increase of guerrilla activity in Ninh Thuan Province (Paras. 13-15).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: A showdown in the struggle for control of an influential southern pressure group may be in the offing (Paras. 1-3). On 3 March, the Constituent Assembly decided to establish a military advisory council as a special institution in the future government (Paras. 4-6).

III. North Vietnamese Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Top-level Soviet officials continue to make public statements aimed at demonstrating Soviet support for Hanoi (Paras. 1-4).

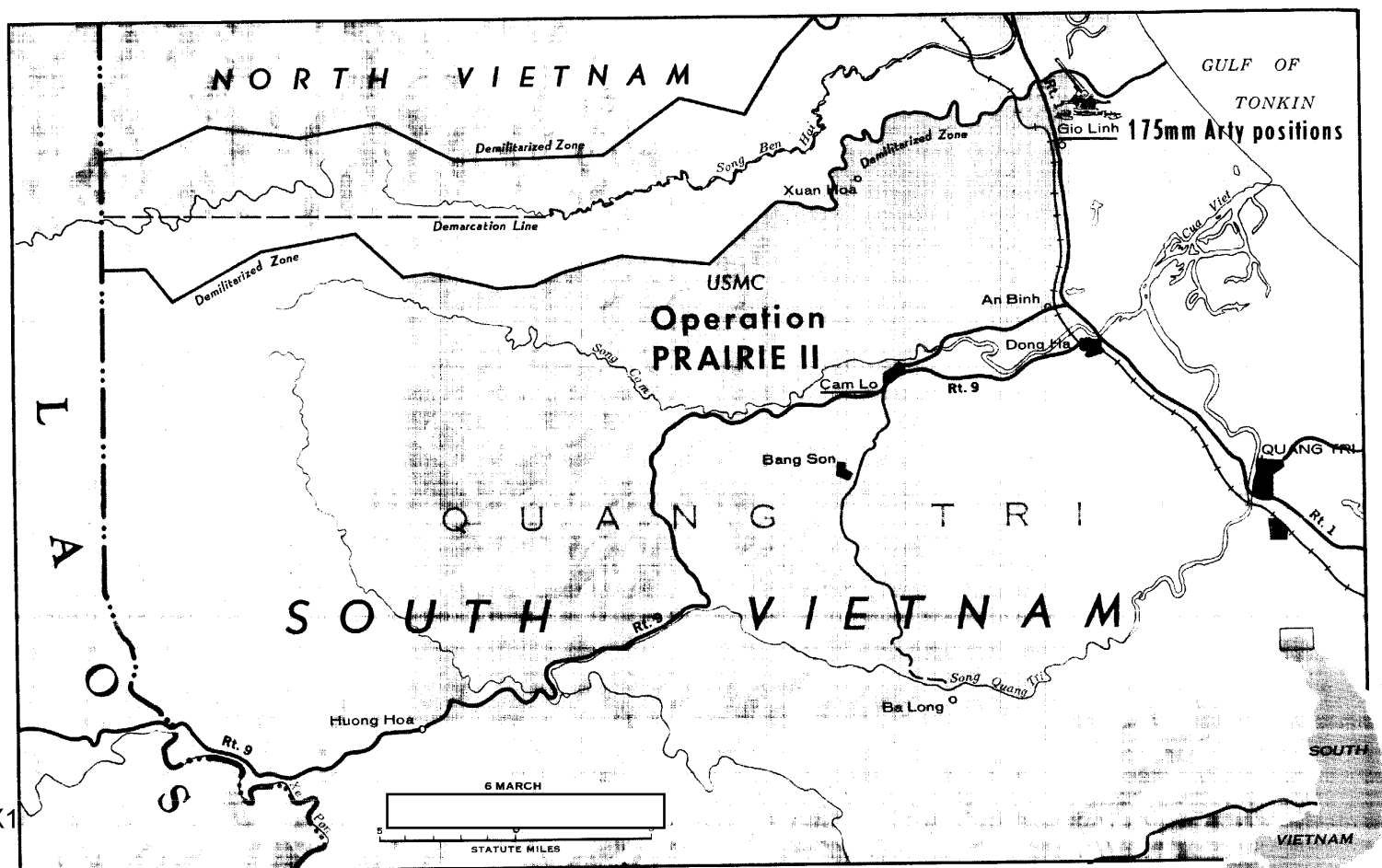
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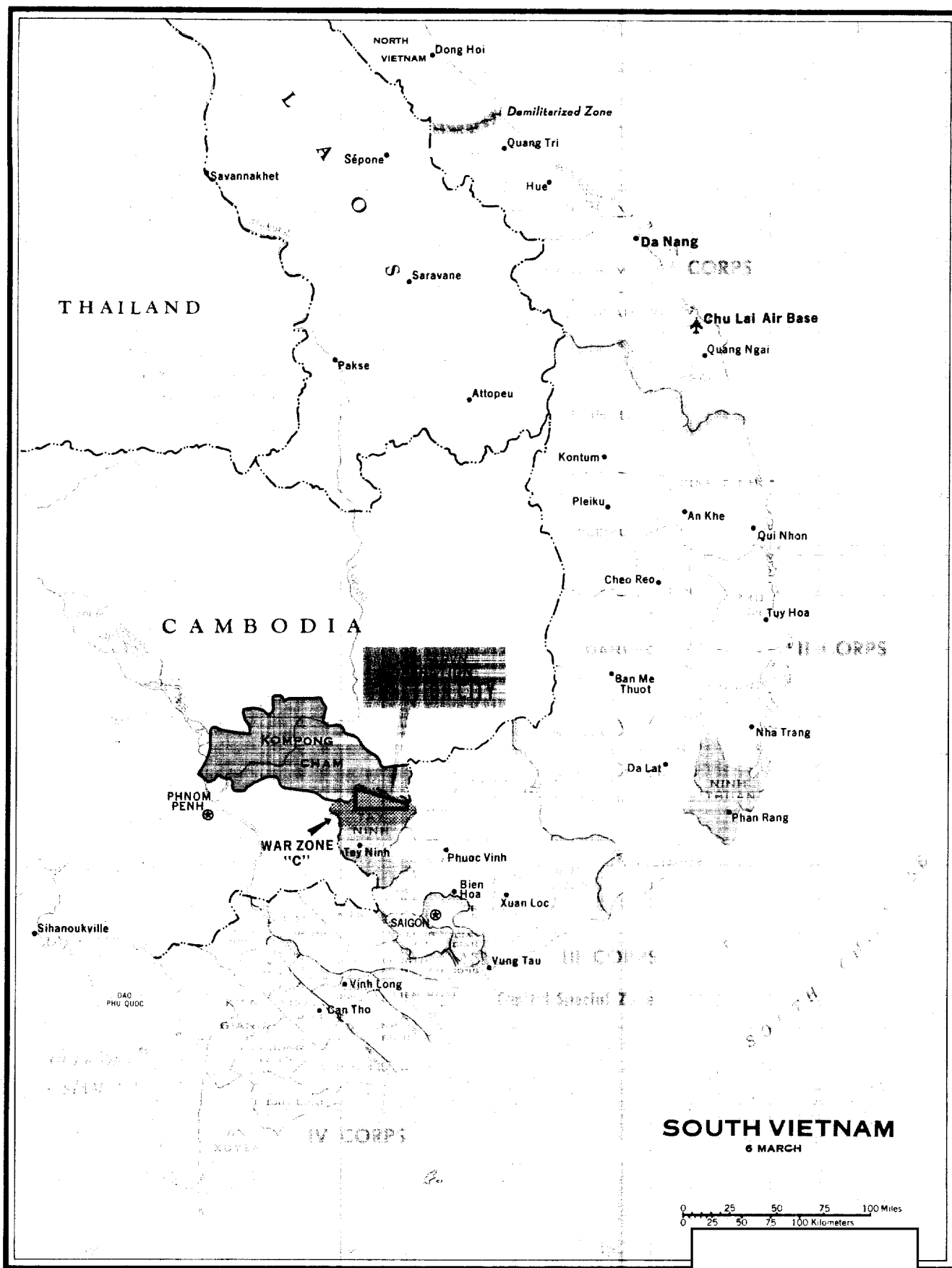


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5. The most recent intensification of NVA military activity in the DMZ/Quang Tri Province area may be a reflection of Hanoi's increasing sensitivity to the recent positioning of US 175-mm. artillery less than two miles south of the formerly neutral buffer zone. Several heavy mortar attacks were launched by the enemy during the past week in an unsuccessful effort to neutralize the heavy artillery. In addition, US Marines participating in Operation PRAIRIE II have reported a series of heavy contacts in this area during the past week, including engagements with battalion-size or larger elements of the 324 "B" NVA Division on 27-28 February and again on 1-2 March. From 2-5 March, ten separate enemy contacts were reported, resulting in Communist losses of 144 killed and marine losses of 12 killed and 44 wounded.

Communist Mortar Attacks

6. Communist forces on 5 March continued to intensify their campaign of mortar attacks against US forces and strategic bases in South Vietnam. Company-strength elements of the US 25th Infantry Division participating in Operation JUNCTION CITY in the environs of War Zone "C" in Tay Ninh Province were the targets of approximately 100 rounds of 60- and 82-mm. mortar fire. US casualties included 20 wounded. In the northern coastal portion of the country, an estimated 30-35 rounds of enemy 82-mm. mortar fire impacted in the billeting area and on the aircraft flight lines of the US Marine air base at Chu Lai. Seven marines were wounded and one aircraft was slightly damaged.

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Rocket Attack on Da Nang

9. A VC porter captured after the recent rocket attack on Da Nang has provided information on the preparations for this attack. He stated that on 28 February--the day prior to the attack--his porter group met approximately 100 North Vietnamese soldiers at an unlocated assembly area. The North Vietnamese soldiers carried the rocket launchers while the porter group was to carry the ammunition. They proceeded down a marked trail which led out of the mountains to the ammunition pick-up point--also unlocated. Here another unidentified group of porters appeared and the rockets were picked up--each suspended on a pole carried by two men.

10. From the ammunition pick-up point, the group proceeded to another unlocated point near a river where some 30 native craft--each with crews of from two to four local force guerrillas--were waiting. All of the rockets were carried in the boats while the bearers walked along the edge of the river.

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11. When the porters arrived at the launch site on the night of the 28th, they found that the NVA rocket gunners had already arrived and prepared the emplacements. The rockets were unloaded and placed in pits and the detainee's group was assigned the task of covering up the launch site after the firing while the remaining porters were sent back along the route they had come. It apparently took the NVA soldiers about three and a half hours to prepare for the attack and about 20 minutes after it was over the North Vietnamese troops withdrew along the same route as the porters.

12. The group which was to police the area was unable to do so as a result of US aircraft fire, so they were dispersed and hidden in underground tunnels and shelters by local guerrillas. The detainee who told this story reported he spent two days in a cave with a North Vietnamese soldier who was killed when Popular Force troops found their cave. This NVA soldier reportedly told the detainee that he had been in South Vietnam for about six months but revealed no other information.

Probable Increase of Viet Cong Guerrilla Activities in Ninh Thuan

13. Several recently captured Viet Cong documents from Ninh Thuan Province indicate that the Communists are attempting to step up guerrilla activities, probably in an effort to regain some of the ground lost since the US 101st Airborne Brigade began operations there more than a year ago.

14. Most of the documents are typically general--calling for an increase in civilian proselyting, in combat hamlet construction, and in troop indoctrination. One document is of particular interest, as it orders the recruitment of guerrillas up to 50 years of age. According to this document, dated 1 January 1967, every party and Revolutionary Youth Group member in the province and members of Viet Cong "agencies and organizations," presumably nonmilitary, between the ages of 15 and 50 are to join guerrilla units. Those over 50, whose physical condition permits their participation in guerrilla activities, must also join.

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15. Two other documents listed irregular strength in Ninh Thuan as 3,556 in December 1965 and 4,525 in November 1966. Of the 4,525 in November, 1,780 were village and hamlet guerrillas. This is a significant number for a province which has been considered to be relatively secure (83 percent of the population secured and only two percent under Viet Cong control, according to MACV figures of 31 December 1966). Despite the strength of the irregulars and the 27 percent increase in this strength during 1966, the Viet Cong have not been very active in Ninh Thuan. The current re-emphasis on guerrilla activities and the call-up of Communists up to age 50 for guerrilla units may presage an attempt to regain prestige and make at least a token resistance to allied inroads in the province. The large US installation at Cam Ranh Bay and elements of the 101st Airborne in Ninh Thuan will probably bear the brunt of any new Communist thrust should this be the Viet Cong intention.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A showdown in the struggle for control of the Southern Alumni Association--an influential southern pressure group--may be in the offing. The present head of the organization, retired General Tran Van Don, and his group of older, more conservative members are being challenged by younger "progressives" led by Vo Long Trieu, who is the acknowledged leader of militant southern Constituent Assembly deputies and a supporter of Tran Van Huong's presidential candidacy.

2. General Don, who has decided to run for another term as the association's president, is trying to postpone association elections until next month in order to gain time to round up support. Trieu and his group on the association's executive committee overruled Don's request for a postponement, but may agree to it anyway in order to avoid an open split among the organization's 1,500 members.

3. Should the "progressives" win control of the association, it may become much more active politically, and could serve as an important element of a broader political grouping backing Huong's presidential candidacy. Should General Don retain control, the association will continue to be relatively conservative, and will probably be more sympathetic to Premier Ky.

Constituent Assembly Developments

4. In its session of 3 March, the Constituent Assembly approved the establishment under the constitution of a military advisory council as a special institution of the future government. Assemblymen generally agreed that this council should only be advisory in nature, and should deal only with such matters directly affecting the military as promotions, transfers, and disciplinary measures in contrast to advisory responsibilities for broader policy

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questions. The organization and regulation of the council, including the question of whether the future president should act as its chairman, is to be spelled out in future legislation.

5. Chief of State Thieu in particular has emphasized the creation of a special military council, perhaps to insure a fitting position for himself should he not run for president. In a formal letter to the assembly on 22 February, General Thieu called for the creation of a "High Council for National Defense and the Armed Forces," through which the military could "make its voice heard, contribute to national reconstruction, and legally set forth the aspirations of those who have sacrificed so much for their country." Thus it may well be that the assembly's version of this council does not meet Thieu's expectations. However, because the council is to be the subject of future legislation, some latitude remains for the council's functions to be modified.

6. On 4 March, the assembly began to consider the establishment of a cultural and educational council, but adjourned before voting on any provisions. Before its deadline of 27 March for completing the constitution, the assembly must also consider advisory councils on economic and social matters and on ethnic minorities, and then consider chapters on the role of political parties, the constitutional amending process, and transitional provisions.

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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. In a speech on 6 March, Soviet Premier Kosygin condemned the US for "expanding the war" in Vietnam after the US had allegedly spurned what he called the "extremely important peaceful initiative" made in late January by North Vietnamese Foreign Minister Trinh. Kosygin's remarks were in keeping with comments he made last month during his visit to London, and with persistent attempts by Soviet propaganda to portray Trinh's statement as a generous, conciliatory move. Kosygin ritualistically attacked US "talk" of a peaceful settlement, calling it mere "word-mongering, calculated to deceive public opinion."

2. The recent flow of authoritative Russian statements on Vietnam indicates a desire to make Moscow's public support for Hanoi unmistakably clear. The pronouncements also reflect considerable irritation over world press speculation on Soviet intentions, especially various reports on Kosygin's activities in London. Pravda on 3 March made a point of denouncing the "fantastic conjectures" on Kosygin's London visit printed in a Joseph Alsop column last week. Pravda labeled Alsop's remarks on Moscow's role as an intermediary and its "alleged desire" to make Hanoi retreat a "provocative fabrication."

3. Kosygin today carried the polemic with China a step further by charging that alleged efforts by the US to preclude any prospect for talks on Vietnam have "met with the support of Peking." Adding a new twist to Moscow's dual campaign against both the US and China, Kosygin maintained that, in their common determination to avoid negotiations, "the position of the present Chinese Government actually coincides with that of the American ruling circles."

4. The Soviet premier warned the US, in familiar terms, that "new steps, intensifying

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aggression, will meet new efforts to put an end to it." Similarly, Soviet President Podgorny used the occasion of a Kremlin ceremony at which he received the credentials of the new North Vietnamese ambassador to the USSR to reiterate Moscow's oft-expressed determination to continue giving Hanoi "comprehensive economic and military assistance."

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